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WASHINGTON LETTER.

WASHINGTON, September 25, 1893.

NEW GEOGRAPHY.—The recently published report on the population and resources of Alaska at the eleventh census—a 4to volume of 293 pages and 75 plates—must be regarded as the latest reliable geographical and statistical account of this interesting domain. Under seven sub-divisions, known respectively as the Southeastern, the Kadiak, the Unalaska, the Nushagak, the Kuskokwim, the Yukon, and the Arctic districts, apportioned among several investigators, viz.: Miner W. Bruce, Eliza R. Scidmore, Henry Boursiñ, Samuel Applegate, Alfred B. Schanz, William C. Greenfield and Henry D. Woolfe, the descriptions of the tribes and their districts, geography and topography, manners and customs, superstitions and ceremonies, diseases, dwellings, food supplies, etc., are treated from the standpoint of actual habitation. A goodly number of men know intimately some portion of Alaska. It is safe to say that no one man can speak from personal knowledge of all portions.

On an estimated area greater than that of all the States north of Tennessee and east of the Mississippi there is a population of 32,052, or less than in most single counties of the populous east.

General Halleck in 1868, by means of unconscious duplication of tribes under similar names and the insertion of a few imaginary ones, “officially” reported

82,400 people in Alaska; and to this Rev. Vincent Collyer in the same year added 11,900 as a special estimate of the Thlingit tribes. It has required a long time and severe services to get "cold facts" from Alaska, and evidently "bottom facts" have not yet been reached in too many instances.

The last ten years have witnessed greater progress in the knowledge of the geography and topography of this territory than any corresponding period since its discovery. The expeditions to the Alpine coast region and Mount St. Elias by Schwatka, Libbey, Seton-Karr, and Russell; the interior explorations by Schwatka, Dr. Hayes, and the Frank Leslie Illustrated Weekly expedition; the exploration of the course of the Copper River by Abercrombie and Allen; of the region of the Upper Yukon and the Porcupine River by McGrath and Turner; of the basins of the great Kowak and Noatak rivers by Cantwell and Stoney; the soundings and surveys by the Coast Survey, the U. S. Revenue Marine, and the U. S. Fish Commission steamer *Albatross* comprise the substance of geographical work.

A report of the expedition to Muir Glacier, Alaska, under the charge of Prof. H. F. Reid, of Cleveland, has been recently published as an appendix to the report of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey for 1891. This expedition was organized in the spring of 1890, and consisted of Prof. Reid, H. P. Cushing, H. McBride, R. L. Casement, J. F. Morse, and C. A. Adams. The party remained in camp from July 1 until the middle of September, mapping and studying the locality. The report embraces a general geography of the region, with a description of Glacier Bay, Muir

Inlet, Muir Glacier, its tributaries, drainage, geology, and the probable changes going on.

A great deal of old, and some new geographical information concerning the Orange Free State is communicated by the American consular agent in the July and September issues of the consular reports. The statistics of diamond mining are new and interesting, and especially an account of the 971 carat stone recently (June, 1893) found in the Jagersfontein mine.

The only general account concerning the island of St. Christopher—discovered by Columbus, and given his Christian name—ever printed in the consular reports is that by Stephen W. Parker in the September issue.

Among other interesting items he notes that out of a population of 31,000 there are few pure-blooded white people. No elections are held because the people, although emancipated fifty years ago, are, as a mass, not sufficiently intelligent to rule themselves. The members of the legislature are appointed by the Governor. The island has been a sanitarium for the last one hundred years or more; but Mr. Parker regards the neighboring island of Nevis as the best winter resort in the world. No crop other than sugar is considered, and this to the value of \$2,000,000 is annually raised and exported—largely to the United States.

Lieutenant A. F. Fechteler of the U. S. Steamship *Albatross* reports to the Navy Department some very recent information, accompanied by two charts, of the Shumagin Islands in the Gulf of Alaska.

Lieutenant Alexander McCrakin of the U. S. Steamship *Marion* communicates information pertaining to Koh Kram, near the eastern shore of the Gulf of Siam.

Except on the hilltops the country is thickly wooded. The surface is generally hilly and rises to a height of about 700 feet above the level of the sea. An engraved sketch of Koh Kram bay on the northwest side of that island accompanies *Notices to Mariners* for Sept. 2, 1893.

The "Cherokee Strip," so called, which was recently added to the territory of Oklahoma, is 200 miles long, 56 miles wide and embraces 8,144,682 acres.* It lies between the 96th and 100th meridians of west longitude, with the southern border line of Kansas as its northern boundary, and the Creek country and territory of Oklahoma as its southern. It is said to be the finest body of land of its size on the American continent, "With soil of surpassing richness and depth, mineral resources of great value and inexhaustible quantity, natural scenery unrivalled, and a climate of delicious mildness and salubrity." Topographically it is a rolling country and plentifully watered. The soil of the bottom lands and prairies is soft and loamy, and offers ideal conditions for the unlimited production of corn, wheat, tobacco, cotton and potatoes. The strip is already traversed by four lines of railroads with several other lines just a little outside. The price paid the Cherokees by the Government for the relinquishment of their interest in these lands was \$8,595,736, or \$1.05 per acre. The prices fixed by law to resell to homesteaders are \$2.50, \$1.50 and \$1.00, according to location. Some of the land between meridians 96 and 97½ is said to be worth at least \$50 per acre. So eager is the desire to obtain possession that the territory of Oklahoma will in all probability, within a

* 200 miles x 56 = 11,200 x 640 acres = 7,168,000.

month, have an accretion of at least 30,000 to its population.

BOUNDARIES AND ARBITRATION AND TOPOGRAPHY.—Near the waters of the boundary line between the United States and Canada lies Pope's Folly Island. The island is not valuable in time of peace, but in case of war it would be a decided advantage to the country possessing it. The possession of this island has long been in dispute. It appears that the first chart issued by Great Britain showing the boundary line between the United States and Canada gave the former country the island, but a subsequent chart includes it in Canadian territory. The discovery of the first chart is quite recent. The Superintendent of the Coast and Geodetic Survey and Hon. W. F. King, of Canada, are Commissioners to determine the ownership.

The same gentlemen have still in charge the survey of that part of the line which separates the narrow strip known as Southeast Alaska from British Columbia. The operations of the surveying party this season will be confined to the vicinity of three rivers which cross the narrow strip of territory involved. These rivers begin just north of the Portland Canal and are the Unuk, the Stikine and the Taku.

Prof. George Davidson, assistant in charge of the division of the Coast Survey on the Pacific coast is engaged with a party near Carson City, Nevada, making observations to determine the disputed boundary between California and Nevada.

Capt G. S. Anderson, U. S. A., the acting superintendent of the Yellowstone Park, recommends that

the boundary lines of the Park be resurveyed and marked. He says that the most disastrous forest fire of many years occurred during July of this year, when a strip about seven miles long and two or more miles wide was destroyed. Wild game is very abundant, but poaching is on the increase. The Secretary of the Interior, who recently visited the Park, says that its geysers, lakes, mountains and canyons are beautiful and interesting beyond description, and that more of nature's wonders and beauties could be seen there than anywhere else.

Within a few months the case of dispute between Argentina and Brazil for the fertile territory lying between the rivers Uruguay and Paraná, which goes by the name of Misiones, will come up for settlement before the President of the United States, who has been selected as arbitrator by the two Republics. This dispute has been maintained for a century and a half in succession between Spain and Portugal, and between Argentina and Brazil as the heirs of their mother countries. The Jesuit fathers planted their missions in this region (hence the name) and taught the natives agriculture, handicrafts and church ceremonies. These natives were faithful, peaceful and industrious, and with the natural advantages of climate and a most prolific soil, the interfluvial territory whose lines had never been properly fixed became and continued to be the object of longing desire by both countries. Señor Zeballos, the new Argentine minister to the United States, is specially charged with the management of the case against Brazil, and will present the argument of his country.

Señor Zeballos is a scholar and writer of note. He established the Geographical Society, and organized expeditions to Patagonia, the lands of the Araucanians, the desolate grassy leagues of the Gran Chaco and other parts of the Argentine but little known. He is the author of "Visit to the Araucanian Indians" and "Conquest of Fifteen Thousand Leagues," and three novels which deal with Indian life and customs. He has been accumulating materials for a history of the Paraguayan war.

The *real* victory for this country at the Paris tribunal is that the sound principles of international law for which we had always contended have been vindicated and reaffirmed. Beginning with the administration of Washington the United States have been the earnest champions and defenders of the doctrine of the freedom of the seas. We have had war in vindication of this right, and when we joined England and France in suppressing the slave trade we guarded the admission of the right of search, even in the case of suspected slavers. The pretensions put forward during the recent arbitration, to an exclusive ownership or territorial jurisdiction over the waters of Bering Sea, either as the assignee of Russia or upon any other ground, were inconsistent with all the traditions of the American people. Senator Gray, himself a distinguished jurist, well says: "I have never thought there could be any other outcome. It leaves the freedom of the seas unimpaired to the United States and all other peoples, regulated only by the comity of nations and settled international law. To no country in the world is this freedom more important than to us of the United States."

There has recently been printed a report of the proceedings of the Topographical Conference held at Washington in 1892. This Conference convened under instructions of the Superintendent of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, and held daily sessions from January 18 to March 7. Appended to the report are papers embodying the facts and reasons which have governed the members of the Conference in forming opinions and coming to conclusions on the subjects referred to them.

Among the principal conclusions formulated by the Conference were the following :

That balloon photography is not applicable for the purposes of a rapid and economical topographical survey ;

Rules to govern topographical surveys in the several typical regions mentioned. Also, estimates of the approximate cost per square mile for such surveys ;

That over a sparsely inhabited region a less elaborate survey, costing much less per square mile, could be made, which, though lacking in much desirable information, would prove useful in the development of that region ;

That the plane-table is unequalled in its usefulness in every order of work, and that certain improvements to it should be made under the supervision of a committee ;

That the mean sea level is the most desirable datum plane for elevations in topographical surveys ;

That photography may be found at times a useful auxiliary, but under ordinary circumstances cannot compete with the plane table in rapidity, economy, or accuracy ;

That the metre should be adopted as the unit for vertical as well as for horizontal measures ;

That the methods of the Geological Survey would not prove satisfactory or economical for our coast work ;

That a manual be prepared of all instruments in use by the Coast Survey, and a new table of heights, using the metre instead of the foot as the unit for elevations ;

That topographic surveys, to subserve the greatest number of useful purposes, should not be made on a scale smaller than 1-40,000.

The report contains a table of scales of topographical surveys of foreign governments and the United States ; plates of revised conventional signs, and notes on European topographical surveys and maps.

HYDROGRAPHIC.—A pilot chart of the Pacific Ocean is a possible new feature of work in the Hydrographic Office. While the waters of the Pacific do not afford so many interesting features as are usually shown on the pilot chart of the Atlantic Ocean, Commander Sigsbee, U. S. Hydrographer, believes that there is enough material in the way of observation of the movements of the seals, icebergs, and storms, in the Northern Pacific especially, to provide a monthly chart which will be of great value to the shipping interest of the west coast and, in fact, of the world.

Lieut. Beehler, assistant in the Bureau of Navigation, succeeds Ensign Everett Hayden in the division of marine meteorology—the science so materially developed by the latter gentleman. Lieut. Beehler is a successful naval officer and an accomplished student in matters relating to navigation. He is the inventor of

the solarometer, an instrument intended to improve the art of navigation by supplanting the compass and sextant, and by which the ship's exact position is obtainable at any time of day or night whenever a heavenly body is visible.

The Hydrographic Office has recently issued a publication by Mr. Herrle giving the depths over bars, and the draft that can be carried over, and the mean rise and fall of spring, mean and neap tides for the principal harbors and anchorages on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States.

The people on the Pacific coast of North America have high expectations of the reported enormous coal deposits in Alaska, some of which are of fine quality, and so situated as to make mining easy and inexpensive. It has been stated that some of the ledges crop out so near the shore that vessels can be loaded near the mouth of the tunnel through which the drifts are reached. The climate of Alaska will not prohibit the working of coal mines even in the winter, after the drifts and shafts and tunnels get well under the surface. A writer in the *San Francisco Post* says that the water carriage of coal from Alaska to San Francisco during the summer months when it would be brought there should be very inexpensive. A vessel could load coal and bring it there cheaper than a railroad could haul it from the Pennsylvania mines to New York.

Every one who has been through the hall beneath the dome of the Capitol has noticed the figures which run in a circle nearly around the wall, depicting the principal events in the march of American progress. A blank space has been reserved for the delineation of one of

the greatest events of all. It will portray the driving of the last spike of the first transcontinental railway. The principal character in the scene died not long ago, leaving an unparalleled legacy to the cause of education.

Few people have any definite idea of the actual sum of money represented by the property which will eventually come into the possession of the trustees of Leland Stanford University. A reliable authority on the Pacific coast says it consists of three pieces of land: Palo Alto, 8,400 acres; Gridley, 22,000 acres, and Vina, 59,000 acres. It is difficult to form an adequate idea of the money value of such land at the present time, but the yield of a fractional part of Vina alone represents an endowment of \$8,000,000, and a present income of \$240,000.

If all the land in the three properties which is suited to vineyard growing were planted in vines it would represent the enormous sum of \$200,000,000 and an annual income equal to the *endowment* of the richest university in America. These estimates take no account of the value of these estates in the great future. At present a large portion of Palo Alto and Gridley is under high cultivation, while less than 5,000 of the 59,000 acres of Vina—the richest of all—are planted in vines.

Admiral T. A. Jenkins, who died recently in this city, was in many respects a most remarkable man. From the year 1828, when he entered the navy as midshipman to the end of his life at the age of 82, he served his country well and faithfully. Aside from his active participation in the strictly naval operations of the Government during that long and very eventful period,

his services in connection with the Coast Survey and the Light-house Board were of the highest order, and characterized by remarkable intelligence. He contributed extensively to the literature of marine meteorology hydrography and deep-sea temperatures. To the end of his life he was an omnivorous reader and graceful writer. Until he was taken sick he bought all the new books and was well posted in what was going on in his own profession, in science and in literature.

By long accretion, the amount now credited by the Register of the Treasury to the fund popularly known as the "Conscience Fund" amounts to \$266,089.56. This account was opened in 1811 and is intended to show the receipts of money by the government from unknown persons. The funds are turned into the general treasury as miscellaneous receipts, and are used like other assets, as Congress may direct.

Apropos of this is the "Patent Office Fund," which is the excess of receipts over the expenditures of that office for many years. The amount is large—well up towards a million dollars; but as a matter of fact the balance exists only on paper, the entire receipts of the office having been turned into the treasury and used as are other receipts of the government. Nevertheless the book-keeping balance is accentuated annually by every Commissioner of Patents as an argument for a new building. The recent removal of all models from the great marble building long known as the Patent Office, to make room for other government bureaus, changes a "landmark" of Washington sight-seers. It is not likely that this collection will ever again have the extensive prominence it has so long had, but in the future it will be

accessible in plainer and more obscure quarters, while the "Patent Office" so called will be known as the "Department of the Interior." At present the long procession of inventors' models occupies the third and fourth floors of a building temporarily leased for the city Post Office. *Sic transit.* The grand structure now vacated was built exclusively for the Patent Office before the Department of the Interior was thought of. Following the order of precedent, the same fate awaits the building now being constructed for the Library of Congress. This building—one of the largest, if not the largest in Washington, excepting the Capitol, contains more space than will be required for library use for a generation to come. Meanwhile every department of the Government is overcrowded. Already interests are working quietly to secure quarters in this great building. If one, then another, and more, until the National Library building will be such in name only.

NOTES.—Since August 1st commerce has been practically suspended between Russia and Germany. Owing to disagreements in respect to a commercial treaty, negotiations were broken off, and Russia declared against Germany a retaliatory tariff in which all existing import duties should be advanced 50 per cent. Germany promptly retorted by declaring a similar increase of 50 per cent. in the duties on all imports from Russia. The value of this state of affairs to America and other exporting countries lies in the fact that the German embargo cannot be modified until the meeting of the Parliament in November, by which time most of

the rivers and canals of Russia will be closed to navigation, leaving transportation to the railways, whose rates for long distances, especially in Russia, are practically prohibitory for grain and coarse products. As the Russo-German commerce for the coming autumn and winter must therefore practically cease, American producers and exporters may well examine the nature and extent of this newly opened opportunity.

The German Minister of War has ordered the military authorities to use Indian corn mixed with oats in making up the rations for army horses. This may lead to heavy importation of American corn.

Of a total exportation of green fruits from Palermo during the year ending June 30, 1893, amounting to \$2,496,083, the shipments to the United States were \$2,376,929. That Florida and California will at no distant day supply the orange demand of the world is demonstrated by the constant decrease in the exportation of that fruit from Sicily to the United States. The export of last year was only half that of the preceding year, and as a consequence vast numbers of orange groves have been supplanted by the lemon.

A concession has recently been given to a Lisbon corporation to lay and operate a submarine telegraph line between Mozambique and Quilimane, 300 miles distant. There is already a line between Quilimane and Tete, a distance of about 325 miles. The same corporation is authorized to construct a line between Tete and Zumbo, 220 miles, and from Tete to Missala, 145 miles. Also branch lines to Nyassaland in British Central Africa. If these concessions are carried out, the southern part of Nyassaland and all the

Zambezi Valley under Portuguese rule will be placed in telegraphic communication with the outer world.

A very useful adjunct to the silver question is a hand-book recently issued from the Government printing office containing a compilation of the coinage laws of the United States from 1792 to 1893. It was prepared under the direction of the Senate committee on Finance. An appendix includes a number of valuable statistics in connection with this question. H.